The Butler County, Pennsylvania Commissioners are aware of the ongoing water problems existing in the Woodlands of Connoquenessing Township. Although providing water is not a legal obligation of county government, as Commissioners, we would like to see a permanent solution to the problem. The County does not have authority to regulate oil and gas well drilling or any functions related to the industry. Regulation is by the State through its legislative process. In February, 2012, Pennsylvania enacted the Oil and Gas Act. As Commissioners, we have individually, and as a group, held meetings with various entities and individuals, including Representative Brian Ellis, Pennsylvania American Water Company, Connoquenessing Township officials, Rex Energy, a private consultant and residents of the area.

Two problems must be addressed prior to the project moving forward. First, a water association must be created by the residents of the Woodlands to determine those individuals interested in bringing water to their area. Second, the responsibility and the contribution in time and money by members of the newly created association must be identified. **The people of the Woodlands must unite if this project is to move forward.**

As County Commissioners, we are willing to help the residents of the Woodlands obtain water, but the residents must also be willing to participate with their time and resources to make this project a reality for them.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to clarify a few misconceptions and statements set forth in the Marcellus Outreach Butler petition posted on the Change.org website. **First**, Chairman William McCarrier is not the Vice-President, nor does he own or retain a position at Interstate Pipe and Supply Company. **Second**, impact fee monies may be utilized in numerous areas. The statute sets forth permissive usage in the following areas: 1) construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of roadways, bridges and public infrastructure; 2) water, storm water and sewer systems, including construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair; 3) emergency preparedness and public safety, including law enforcement and fire services, hazardous material response, 911, equipment acquisition and other services; 4) environmental programs, including trails, parks and recreation, open space, flood plain management, conservation districts and agricultural preservation; 5) preservation and reclamation of surface and subsurface waters and water supplies; 6) tax reductions, including homestead exclusions; 7) projects to increase the availability of safe and affordable housing to residents; 8) records management, geographic information systems and information technology; 9) the delivery of social services; 10) judicial services; 11) for deposit into the county or municipality’s capital reserve fund if the funds are used solely for a purpose set forth in this subsection; 12) career and technical centers for training of workers in the oil and gas industry; and 13) local or regional planning initiatives under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. **Third**, for the year 2011, Connoquenessing Township received $205,486.68 and Butler County received $897,339.73. Part of the County’s $897,339.73 is Marcellus Legacy Fund disbursement in the amount of $155,988.65 and by statute is only allowed to be utilized for the “planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, natural areas, community conservation and beautification projects, community and heritage parks and water resource management. Funds may also be used to acquire lands for recreational or conservation purposes and land damaged or prone to drainage by storms or flooding.”

At an August 10, 2012, meeting with Pennsylvania Representative Brian Ellis, representatives from the Pennsylvania American Water Company, Connoquenessing Supervisor, Terry Steinhauser, and all three Butler County Commissioners (William McCarrier, A. Dale Pinkerton and James Eckstein) were in attendance. The focus of discussion centered on a permanent solution for the residents of the Woodlands. At the meeting, information was shared regarding Rex Energy’s extension of a public water line, including a pumping station, to within
approximately a one mile distance from the Woodlands community. It was also shared that the water line Rex Energy installed for supplying water to their drilling site might be turned over to the water company after drilling efforts terminate in approximately an 18-24 month period (early 2014). Until the water line is turned over to Pennsylvania American Water Company and until the water line passes a back-flush test for possible contamination, it is a waiting game. However, this time can be put to good use by a joint effort between the unified Woodlands’ residents, township, county and Pennsylvania American Water Company in conjunction with the State representative to formulate a realistic solution.

If and when the water line becomes available for extension, one of the problems facing this potential project is the funding to extend the water line the last mile, or so, which is estimated to cost $800,000.00 or more. Another problem is the cost involved to build and operate a water distribution building (approximately $75,000) and system if the water line enters the Woodlands’ community. A major complication exists regarding the roadways in the Woodlands. When the plan was initially filed with the recorders’ office, the developer granted all of the roadways to the public entity being Connoquenessing Township. Further research indicated the Township never adopted any of the Woodlands’ roadways.

After the August 10, 2012, meeting, Commissioner Eckstein requested a copy of the feasibility study, including any and all maps, as to where the most cost effective route for the water line’s placement for providing public water to the Woodlands’ residents in relation to where the Rex Energy’s waterline ends with no response from Pennsylvania American Water Company. He also requested a copy of the required specifications for the water distribution building and card-swipe system discussed at the meeting with no response from Pennsylvania American Water. Commissioner Eckstein also met with residents of the Woodlands, including interested individuals working with Woodlands’ residents, regarding a viable solution. Although not confirmed as of this date, it is the Commissioners’ understanding that a possible housing development may be in the works which would bring the water line closer to the Woodlands community. Commissioner Eckstein’s recent letter was sent to Larry Lambo of the Pennsylvania American Water Company on January 22, 2013, requesting the feasibility plans. Commissioner Pinkerton met with officials of Pennsylvania American Water Company and urged them to do everything possible to hasten the construction of the water line to the Woodlands. Commissioner McCarrier had numerous meetings with the various entities involved in an attempt to alleviate the problem. All three Commissioners diligently expended large amounts of time on this project. The County Commissioners are now collectively working to obtain the needed information.

If this cause is to move forward to fruition, blame must be set aside and the Woodlands’ residents must unify in solidarity to work with all necessary sources and parties to get a public water line to their community. We believe Rex Energy is a vital party to this effort and should be a supporting neighbor to this vital cause while benefiting from the natural resources. We would very much like to meet with the representatives of the Woodlands community to move this effort forward.

If any individual who supported this petition would like to contribute to the Woodlands’ residents solution, both financial contributions and in-kind contributions are welcomed. Financial contributions can be forwarded to: Water for Woodlands, c/o White Oak Springs Presbyterian Church, 102 Shannon Road, Renfrew, PA 16053. Their email address is waterforwoodlands@gmail.com for any questions.

We believe UNITED we can get the job done, but DIVIDED we will fail.

William McCarrier  A. Dale Pinkerton  James Eckstein